

Range Initiative. It will be approved in October by the FAA and the Air Force. What that training initiative is going to do is make sure that as those pilots get off the ground, within a matter of minutes, they can train in supersonic air space. This is not true anywhere else in the country. For many, many pilots, they must fly 2 to 3 hours in order to get to a training area.

At Cannon Air Force Base, there are nearby bombing ranges, there is training, there is going to be this access to supersonic air space, which is enormously important, and they will be able to train immediately and not have to travel those long distances. That fact was not even considered by the Department of Defense because their cutoff date was December of 2004, so we are going to put that fact before the commission.

The third issue is what is called the military value and mission of this particular base. This is a top-notch base. It is an exceptional base. We have spent as a country \$53 million over the last 6 or 7 years improving the towers, improving the runways, improving and enhancing the fire-fighting capability on the base and increasing base housing so that the base is in the kind of shape to make sure that our airmen and women that train there are ready to go into battle.

To close, this is a bad decision. Our Congressional delegation and Governor are united. We are going to persuade that base closing commission that this was not the right decision for the country.

Madam Speaker, Friday the 13th was a day that unfortunately lived up to its ominous reputation when the Department of Defense (DoD) released its Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations. In what I and the entire New Mexico Congressional Delegation believe is an enormous mistake, the Secretary of Defense included Cannon Air Force Base on its list of bases recommended for closure.

The BRAC process was established over a decade ago following the collapse of the Soviet Union as a means to realign or close military installations that are believed to be no longer needed for our Nation's defense. There have been BRAC rounds in 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995. This year's BRAC round, however, was expected to be one of the largest as Defense Secretary Don Rumsfeld pledged to shrink the number of military installations in the United States by as much as 25 percent. Although Secretary Rumsfeld recently acknowledged that the BRAC round would be less extensive than earlier thought, DoD still recommended closing 33 bases, including Cannon.

This is just the beginning of our fight to save Cannon. The list of recommendations submitted by the DoD to the BRAC Commission is only the first stage of a lengthy process. The next step is the Commission must submit its list of recommendations to President Bush on September 8th. The President will then either approve or disapprove the recommendations made by the BRAC Commission and submit to Congress. Congress will then have an up-or-down vote on the recommendations.

Until September 8th, however, I will work with the entire Congressional Delegation, Governor Richardson, and the Clovis and Portales Communities to fight to get Cannon off the list of recommended closures.

A central argument we will make to the commissioners is the issue of "range encroachment." It is the process whereby a military base is progressively hemmed in by urban growth, competition for air space, and other factors. Such a development can detract from a base's desirability, and thus make it a target for future closure and realignment in the BRAC round. Cannon has two long runways, excellent airspace, and bombing ranges with no encroachment issues.

Additionally, the Department of Defense did not take into account the New Mexico Training Range Initiative as part of its analysis of Cannon's military value. Although the Initiative has yet to be fully approved, it is expected to be by October of this year. The Training Range Initiative will allow training at supersonic speeds, only further adding to the exceptional capabilities offered by Cannon Air Force Base. It is further evidence of the DoD's shortsightedness that they failed to take into account this valuable initiative.

Cannon Air Force Base is a critical component of our Nation's defense. It is also equally, if not more, important to the communities of Clovis and Portales and the entire State of New Mexico. There are several months to fight the DoD's recommendation and I plan to do so vigilantly side-by-side with you, the other members of the Congressional Delegation, and Governor Richardson to show the BRAC Commissioners just how valuable Cannon, Clovis, and Portales are to our Nation.

FEDERALIZING THE CRIME OF KILLING A POLICE OFFICER AND FLEEING THE COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I have taken this time today to announce the introduction of legislation. Today my very distinguished colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF), has joined me in introducing legislation that calls for making it a Federal crime to kill a law enforcement officer and flee the country.

Just yesterday we saw the memorial held for the fallen peace officers, and we had here in Washington the Sheriff of Los Angeles County, Lee Baca, who is really the progenitor of this legislation, along with the Chief of Police of the City of La Verne, Ron Ingels, who was representing the California Police Chiefs Association and the Los Angeles County Police Chiefs Association.

We have had over the past 3 years a very tragic case in Southern California. Three years ago this last month we saw the tragic murder of Deputy Sheriff David March by a Mexican national, who chose to first shoot Deputy March and leave and then return and put the gun to Deputy Sheriff March's head and kill him, and then flee the

country, knowing full well that he would face, if extradited, the death penalty, and that would prevent the Mexican government from extraditing him.

Well, over the past 3 years, in a bipartisan way, my colleagues the gentleman from California (Mr. McKEON), who represents the March family, along with the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF), whom I mentioned, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN), and a wide range of Members, especially of the California delegation, have come together trying to deal with this issue.

While the introduction of today's legislation will not directly deal with the March case, it clearly is legislation that is designed to ensure that as we look at the prospect of someone killing a law enforcement officer and fleeing the country, we will have the full force of the Federal Government behind our quest for a resolution. This does not in any way preempt the opportunity for county and State jurisdictions to pursue with vigor a case such as this, but it does provide the option for the Federal Government to be involved, and also to deal with any kind of negotiating that might be necessary to ensure that someone can be extradited.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join as cosponsors of this legislation, which will federalize the crime of killing a law enforcement officer and fleeing the country. As I say, the bill is going to be introduced today, so I would encourage as many of my colleagues as possible to join on board in this bipartisan effort to help ensure that we bring the killers of law enforcement officials to justice.

AIR FORCE ACADEMY INAPPROPRIATELY AND IMPROPERLY PUTTING PRESSURE ON CADETS TO FOLLOW CERTAIN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I was disturbed to read of reports that people at the Air Force Academy were inappropriately and improperly putting pressure on cadets to follow certain religious practices. In this particular case, cadets who did not follow a certain brand of Christianity were being ridiculed and being criticized, and the allegations were that they were even being pressured by officials of the Academy to follow this specific set of religious practices.

Obviously, we should create a situation in which people of any religious persuasion are free at the Academy to follow that. But for young men and women who were sent to the Academy to learn to lead our Air Force and defend our country in that important institution to be subjected to religious

pressures, religious ridicule and criticism because they do not particularly follow one or another religion is terrible public policy, and, of course, unconstitutional.

When I heard that, my reaction was to give the Air Force the benefit of the doubt. I wrote a letter to the Air Force Academy and the Secretary of the Air Force asking that the Air Force be looking into this, and I had read that in fact they were. So I thought, well, I hope we are talking with reasonable people. These allegations sounded to me like things that no reasonable person would allow to go forward. Let us see what happens. I decided I would wait to see what the Air Force did.

Well, I am not waiting anymore, because the Air Force has acted. They have made things worse. They have done some things that confirm the view that I and others have that there is something seriously wrong.

Captain Melinda Morton, an Air Force chaplain, number two in the chaplaincy there, was just transferred, well ahead of when she was supposed to be transferred, to Okinawa.

Now, I mean no disrespect to Okinawa. For the people that live there, it is home, and it is a wonderful home. It has a lot of advantages. But when you are the number two in the chaplaincy in Colorado and you are sent to Okinawa very suddenly, it is clearly meant to be a rebuke, and the reason that the number two in the chaplain's office was sent to Okinawa was because she was supporting the criticisms.

According to a New York Times article, which I will include for the record, she was told by the Chief Chaplain, Colonel Whittington, after a critical report on this subject from a team from the Yale Divinity School, she was asked to denounce the report and defend the Academy. But she said she could not do that because she agreed with the report. It was about 2 weeks later that she was transferred to Okinawa.

So we have here not just a refusal to deal with inappropriate abuse of people on religious grounds, but a punishment of a very brave officer, a woman of integrity, a chaplain, a member of the clergy, who in pursuance of her faith and her obligations and her understanding of the Constitution refused to say something that she thought untrue about a report.

When intelligent people say silly things, it generally means that they do not want to tell you the truth. The explanation the Air Force gives for sending her to Okinawa makes no sense at all. I do not believe we have put in charge of the Academy people incapable of making sense, so when they tell us things that are just silly, I think they are covering up.

They gave a convoluted argument about, well, the other guy is going to leave, so she is going to have to leave afterwards, and, therefore, they both have to leave together. It makes zero sense. If anything, you would probably

say if a new person was coming in, it would be better to have her there to help train him.

Then we were also told by both the New York Times and the Associated Press that Colonel Whittington, the chaplain who apparently asked her to denounce the report, and when she disagreed with him and said she could not denounce the report she agreed with, and the report said there had been inappropriate religious pressure, he apparently was part of an effort to penalize her. We are told that he could not give an interview to the New York Times and the AP because he was being interviewed by the Air Force Special Study Panel.

Now, I doubt very much that the Air Force Special Study Panel is grilling him 18 hours a day, or even 10 hours a day. In other words, there is obviously no conflict between being interviewed by this panel and also talking to the press.

Why do they not let the chaplain talk to the press? Because they are afraid if he told the truth it would be embarrassing, is my inference. If there is a different argument, let them give it to us.

Madam Speaker, we should note that among those who brought these allegations to light originally is a proud Air Force Academy alumni, Michael Weinstein, who worked for the Reagan Administration, whose son is now there, who said he has spoken to 117 people at the Academy who validate the accusation that there is inappropriate pressure put on people and that people are subject to disadvantages if they do not follow a particular religious view.

The Air Force has got to reverse this pattern of religious oppression at the Academy, of religious abuse, "oppression" may be too strong; it has got to stop the transfer of a brave woman for speaking out; and they have got to take seriously a problem, rather than make it worse.

Madam Speaker, I include for the record the May 15, 2005, New York Times article entitled "Air Force Chaplain Says She Was Removed for Being Critical."

[From the New York Times, May 25, 2005]

AIR FORCE CHAPLAIN SAYS SHE WAS REMOVED
FOR BEING CRITICAL
(By Laurie Goodstein)

A chaplain at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs who has accused her superiors of using their positions to promote evangelical Christianity among the cadets says she was fired from an administrative job because of her outspokenness and was given orders to ship out to Japan.

An Air Force task force, meanwhile, has finished an investigation at the academy into charges by the chaplain and others that officers there were inappropriately proselytizing the cadets.

The academy chaplain, Capt. Melinda Morton, said she had disagreed with her boss, the academy's chief chaplain, Col. Michael Whittington, after a critical report by a team from the Yale Divinity School was released to the news media in April. The report, dated July 2004 and which she helped

write, found that some academy chaplains were insensitive to the religious diversity of the cadets.

Captain Morton said her boss asked her to denounce the report and defend the academy, but she told him she agreed with it. She said that about two weeks later, on May 4, she received an e-mail message from Colonel Whittington dismissing her from her position as his administrative assistant, or "executive officer." However, she remains a chaplain, retains her rank and earns the same salary.

"That is pretty plainly, in my mind, retribution," Captain Morton said. "That makes a big point on a staff. The point is, 'We don't regard Mel as trustworthy and we humiliate her by firing her.' However, in the whole scope of things, that's pretty minor to what's going on in the academy."

She also said that in March she received orders to transfer to Okinawa, and from there could be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Captain Morton said she was surprised because in December she was told by Colonel Whittington that she would be staying at the academy through summer 2006 to see several projects through. At the time, Captain Morton was developing a sensitivity training program for the academy and was involved in pastoral care for cadets who were victims in a sexual abuse scandal that swept the academy in 2003.

An academy spokesman, Lt. Col. Laurent Fox, said in an interview that Captain Morton's dismissal as executive officer and her reassignment to Okinawa were entirely routine, and not retribution. He said that Captain Morton was removed from her position in order to make way for a new executive officer because Colonel Whittington was leaving the academy in June and Captain Morton is leaving in July.

"We don't see this as a dismissal," Colonel Fox said. "This kind of a transition is a normal process that happens in squadrons across the Air Force."

Colonel Fox said he knew nothing about a meeting that led to a quarrel over the Yale Divinity School report. A request to interview Colonel Whittington was denied because he was being interviewed by the task force investigating the religious climate at the academy. The task force is expected to release a preliminary report on May 23.

Complaints about the religious climate at the academy first surfaced after fliers were passed out in the dining hall advertising a showing of the movie "The Passion of the Christ." An alumnus of the academy, Mikey Weinstein, grew concerned after he visited his son at the school last year and learned that he had been subject to repeated religious slurs because he is Jewish.

Mr. Weinstein, who served in the Reagan administration, said yesterday that he became enraged and set out to see if others had similar experiences. He said he has now spoken with 117 academy cadets, staff members and faculty members who complained about religious intimidation and proselytizing at the academy. Of the 117 people, 8 are Jewish, one is an atheist, about 10 are Catholic and the rest are nonevangelical Protestants.

His son was interviewed by the task force this week, Mr. Weinstein said. He said he was not interviewed by the task force, even though "I have a boatload of information," he said.

"I can't reveal people's names, but I thought it might be useful," he said.

[From Associated Press, May 13, 2005]

CHAPLAIN SAYS SHE WAS OUSTED

(By Robert Weller and Jon Sarche)

DENVER.—A top Air Force Academy chaplain said Thursday she was fired for speaking

up about anti-Semitism and other reports of religious intolerance among cadets and staff, including allegations that evangelical Christians wield too much influence.

Capt. Melinda Morton said she was fired last week by her boss, Col. Michael Whittington. Morton said she was pressured to deny a report by Yale Divinity School Professor Kristen Leslie that a chaplain told 600 cadets during basic training last year "to go back to their tents and tell their fellow cadets that those who are not born again will burn in the fires of hell."

"I was told by Chaplain Whittington that if someone was going to be loyal to the chaplaincy and the Air Force, then someone would take a certain view of the Yale report and view Dr. Leslie as disloyal," Morton said.

Both chaplains had been scheduled to leave the school this year, with Whittington, the academy's chief chaplain, retiring and Morton, his executive officer, scheduled for an overseas assignment. She called that an excuse to get rid of her.

The Air Force's chief chaplain, Maj. Gen. Charles Baldwin, said Morton was not fired.

Her duties have changed, however, because Whittington will retire in June rather than in July as originally planned. Morton has been scheduled for reassignment to an Air Force base in Japan for some time, Baldwin said.

The academy said Whittington was unavailable because he was being interviewed for a Pentagon investigation into more than 50 complaints of religious intolerance in the past several years.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 48 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:
Lord God, Ruler of heaven and Earth, You created us to glorify You both in prayer and by our daily labor.

Look with favor upon us as we begin a new week in Your presence. Let us be fellow workers with You in building an earthly Nation that will reflect the attributes of Your heavenly Kingdom.

Grant to us, O Lord, joy and peace that we may bring these gifts to all we meet, for we desire to live, move, and have our being in You, now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

CONGRATULATING BASCOMB UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor and enthusiasm that I congratulate Bascomb United Methodist Church as they join together for their 175th Homecoming Celebration on June 5, 2005, a church with a rich heritage which continues to serve the Cherokee County community and beyond.

The church began in a mill in 1830 when W.K. McCannless organized a group of Christians which came to be known as Bascomb Church, named for antebellum orator and bishop Henry Bascomb. The church predates the founding of Cherokee County; and as the congregation grew, they moved to a log cabin which also served as a school.

In 1883, after negotiation for land, the framed and painted church was completed with cornerstones bearing the names of the trustees. Modern renovations include additions for classrooms and fellowship and stained glass windows. The chancel cross in the chapel is made from timbers from the 1883 frame building.

With pride I recognize Bascomb United Methodist Church for its 175 years of offering a place of loving care and joyous worship to the people of Woodstock, Georgia, and beyond. I ask all Members to join me in honoring and congratulating the congregation for their remarkable achievements.

NEWSWEEK ERROR

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, all Americans are distressed by the anti-American images that surfaced this weekend in Afghanistan. United States flags are being burned, the American military is being harshly criticized, our good name is being stained. What is more, people are dying.

All of this because of the carelessness of one group of magazine editors at Newsweek magazine. This magazine recently reported that U.S. investigators

had determined American guards at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base had desecrated the Quran by flushing the holy book down the toilet.

Now we have learned that Newsweek has acknowledged errors in its story. The source used by Newsweek's reporters was anonymous, and it is obvious that the magazine failed to fully investigate this "source" and his or her claims.

Newsweek decided to publish these accusations in haste, without regard for the great pain and suffering that they could, and ultimately would, cause.

Some in the media are simply fanatical about being first, and we as a country and as a culture must draw the line and demand more from our media.

Today, I call on Newsweek to fully retract its story and to apologize to the people of Afghanistan whose lives have been forever impacted by this carelessness and to the American people for damaging our good name.

TEXAS MLR

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, some good news today from down in my home State of Texas. Recognizing that a unique turnaround is under way in the State of Texas in the arena of medical liability reform, the American Medical Association today announced that it was removing Texas from its list of States in crisis from the medical liability crisis.

The medical liability crisis in Texas was halted thanks to sweeping reforms that took place almost 2 years ago, in September, 2003, when voters in the State of Texas passed a constitutional amendment which placed an upper limit on noneconomic damages on pain and suffering.

Since those reforms were passed, signs of improvement are widespread in Texas. Access to care is increasing and claims are down; physician recruitment, physician retention is up, especially in high-risk specialties. New insurers are entering the Texas medical liability market, creating more choices for doctors. Subsequently, competition is increasing; and all five of the largest insurers in the Texas medical liability market have announced rate cuts. Rates are down. Doctors are coming back to the State of Texas. This is good news for the patients of Texas as access and affordability have increased.

This House should take up the bill that we passed 2 years ago and react similarly.

FILIBUSTER ARGUMENT A FRAUD

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)